

## Historic Educational Agreement Signed Leading to the Creation of a National Indian Center for Marine and Environmental Research and Education

*"This is an important event for the DOC family. The agreement gives us the opportunity to contribute to the scientific education and research training of many more Native Americans by working through the Tribal colleges. We can look beyond the small amount of seed money we have today, into the future, recognizing that with adequate funding, the Tribes and the DOC can benefit their mutual missions of stewardship of this nation's resources, by creating a diverse workforce that has the special knowledge and experience Native American's can bring."* Dr. Usha Varanasi, Director NWFSC

*"The economy and the lifestyles of the Northwest Indian nations are deeply rooted in the natural resources of the sea. Since tribes have increased responsibility for preserving and sustaining these valuable resources, tribal college are the ideal institutions to provide the education and training for tribal people who will become the technologists, researchers and managers of these tribal resources."* Robert Lorence, President Northwest Indian, Seattle Times, 4/21/00.

On April 20, at a ceremony on the NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center campus, an historic educational agreement was signed, leading to the creation of a National Indian Center for Marine and Environmental Research and Education. Once built, the National Indian Center will draw in NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center scientists, as well as those from through the Department of Commerce (DOC), as adjunct faculty for the Indian College's marine and environmental science programs. The program is designed to be a pilot joint training program in environmental and marine science and research training for Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) throughout the nation. Organizers have \$100,000 in grants from two DOC offices – the NMFS (Northwest Fisheries Science Center) and the Economic Development Administration. The U.S. Census will provide in-kind training for the project in FY00. The agreement is significant not only because it brings together the Department of Commerce and Tribal Colleges and Universities, but because it brings together various bureaus and offices within Commerce as well. Additional grants are hoped for next year to increase capabilities and enhance the project. The National Indian Center is the first in the country aimed at increasing Tribal representation in the ranks of marine and environmental science and technical professionals.

More than 100 officials from Northwest Tribes and Tribal Colleges spent the afternoon mapping out goals for the center. Distance learning will play a key role in the National Indian Center's reach to other TCUs and reservations. While the Northwest Indian College will be the center of educational learning, satellite courses will allow other TCUs to take advantage of the center. Broadcasting lectures via satellite will allow at least 16 of 30 tribal colleges

Photo: *The historic signing on an agreement between the Northwest Indian College and the Northwest Fisheries Science Center creating the National Indian Center for Marine and Environmental Research and Education Joint Institute. Participants in this historic signing were (from left to right): Levi Jefferson, Board Chair, Northwest Indian College; Mr. David Festa, Director of Policy for the Department of Commerce; Dr. Usha Varanasi, Science Director, Northwest Fisheries Science Center; and Dr. Robert Lorence, President, Northwest Indian College.*



to participate in the center's program without leaving their own reservation. Eventually, all 30 schools will be tied into the system.

In addition to the formal ceremony, the NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center conducted tours of its unique scientific laboratory which uses sound scientific principles and practices to resolve complex environmental Pacific salmon and groundfish issues. Research programs highlighted during the tours included:



- < The NWFSC's genetic science program, and how it helps solve the problem of salmon recovery.
- < The NWFSC's unique computer monitored fish rearing facility which also recycles over 99% of its water to save energy.
- < The NWFSC's unique environmental conservation program which researches how pesticides and urban pollution can impact salmon and marine fish.

*Above:* Attendees at the event included (seated from left to right), Kathleen Jewett, NWFSC; Marcia Warren, Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary on Native American Affairs, DOC; Dr. Barbara Rasco, Washington State University; Dr. Gleyln Bledsoe, NW Indian College; (standing) Dr. K. Nan Little, University of Washington, and Moises Carrasco, Regional Director, Bureau of Census.

*At right:* Dr. Varanasi and Dr. Lorence look on as Mr. David Festa reads Deputy Secretary of Commerce Robert L. Mallett's letter of congratulations on the establishment of this first-of-its-kind partnership which can be used as a model for Department of Commerce and other agencies across the nation.



The economy and the lifestyles of the Northwest Indian nations are deeply rooted in natural resources.



Until now, few tribal colleges have had the resources to hire the needed staff to provide Tribal members with marine and environmental scientific and technical training to manage their own natural resources, as well as provide a trained workforce for scientific and technical jobs with the federal government.. This agreement holds the promise of filling both needs by mobilizing Department funds and utilizing DOC personnel to fill the teaching gap.

*Left:* Senator Patty Murry congratulates participants on this historic agreement pledges her support.